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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. DLIX.

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JUNE, 1903.

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## THE WESLEY BICENTENNIAL.

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JOHN WESLEY was born on June 17th (Old Style), 1703. The correction necessitated by the change from Old Style to New Style will place the bicentennial celebration of his birth on Sunday, June 28th, 1903. His life was well-nigh co-extensive with the eighteenth century, as he died on the 2nd of March, 1791.

He was descended on both sides from earnestly religious ancestors, who were ready to labor and to suffer for what they regarded as the truth, some of them in the Established Church of England, some in the ranks of the Dissenters. The influence of such ancestors, and especially of his parents, reveals itself in the early piety of the boy. When eight years old, he was admitted to the communion by his father, the strict and conscientious rector of Epworth. He entered Oxford University in 1720, and six years later was made a Fellow. In 1727, he left Oxford to serve for a short time as curate at Epworth, assisting his father, the rector. In 1729, he returned to Oxford, and resumed the duties of his Fellowship. He became associated with his brother and a few other members of the University in the "Holy Club," and was at once recognized as the leading spirit in the company. In 1735, the two Wesley brothers went to Georgia on a mission to

the Indians. The mission proved unsuccessful, and its history is of little importance excepting as a part of the experience by which the Wesley brothers were prepared for the great work that awaited them. They returned to England in 1737. On the voyage to Georgia, the Wesleys became acquainted with a number of Moravians. These simple Christians had received the tradition of the cardinal doctrines of the Reformation, not primarily from Luther, but from the earlier teaching of John Huss and Jerome of Prague. Their influence upon the life and thought of the Wesleys was of immense importance.

Down to this time, John Wesley was an ascetic moralist and a punctilious ritualist, vainly seeking for inward peace. His deliverance from the sense of bondage came on the 24th of May, 1738. The story may best be told in his own words:

"In the evening I went to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

John Wesley had rediscovered the Lutheran, the Pauline, doctrine of justification by faith. It is a profoundly interesting fact that the revelation came to him in the reading of Luther's Preface to St. Paul's great Epistle. The relation of these three great reformers is a true apostolic succession. In his new-found faith and joyous enthusiasm, John Wesley was ready to lead in a mighty work of evangelism.

It is a curious fact that the man who was destined to revolutionize the religious life of the English-speaking world was a man of extremely conservative temper. He cherished an intense affection for the great historic Church of England in which he had been reared, and an almost superstitious veneration for all her forms and usages. It was only when the pulpits of the Establishment were closed against him and his fellow-evangelists, that they began to preach out of doors; and it was with extreme reluctance that John Wesley followed the example of Whitefield in this innovation. He says himself:

"I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious

of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church."

The stickler for "decency and order," having at last overcome his scruples, preached his first sermon in the open air, on the 2nd of May, 1739, to an audience of three thousand people near Bristol. The previous evening he had expounded the Sermon on the Mount, which he naïvely characterized as a "pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching." Thereafter, he was ready to preach wherever he could find a hearing.

It was with equal reluctance that this conservative revolutionist adopted the innovation of lay preaching. As converts multiplied in his evangelistic labors beyond the power of himself and the few ordained ministers among his associates to care for them, it was inevitable that they should be confided to the care of pious laymen; but, while these laymen were to administer Christian counsel, they were not by any means permitted to usurp the functions of the ministry. But the line that separates exhortation and exposition of Scripture from preaching is a rather shadowy one, and in 1742 Thomas Maxfield, one of the lay helpers, began to preach in London. Wesley was at first disposed to forbid the innovation, but yielded to the sagacious counsel of his mother. "John," said the wise Susanna, "take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself." Wesley heard Maxfield, and was convinced. Thenceforward the unordained order of lay preachers came to be the main part of his evangelistic force.\*

In 1744, the first Conference of the evangelists was held, and from that time to this the name "Conference" has been applied to ecclesiastical assemblies in the various branches of Methodism. These Wesleyan Conferences were by no means deliberative bodies; autocratic, rather than democratic, was the constitution of the new religious body. It was in truth a "Salvation Army," and John Wesley by common consent was its commander-in-chief. Like the centurion in the Gospel, he said to this man, "Go," and he went, and to another, "Come," and he came; but, unlike the

\* Tyerman ("Life and Times of John Wesley," Vol. I., p. 275) asserts that John Cennick preceded Maxfield in preaching. This is very likely true. The important fact is, not that Maxfield preached, but that Wesley recognized and tolerated his preaching, and made it the beginning of a new method of evangelistic work.

centurion, he was not "a man under authority," for he recognized no superior officer this side of heaven.

In 1784, admonished by advancing age that this autocratic government of Methodism must soon cease, Wesley took measures for the permanent organization of the work in England and in America. By a "Deed of Declaration," he conveyed the chapels and other property of the Methodist body to a committee of one hundred of his preachers, providing in the Deed for the perpetuation of the body, and defining their authority. In the same year he ordained Thomas Coke as Superintendent, or Bishop, of the churches in America.

From the beginning of the great revival to the death of John Wesley was a period of rather more than half a century. The record of Wesley's evangelical labors during that time has no parallel since the time of St. Paul. After his return from Georgia, he is said to have preached 42,400 sermons, an average of more than fifteen per week. No form of opposition daunted him or checked his course. He pursued his way, unintimidated by mobs, magistrates, or bishops. The story of that half-century may be summed up, almost without change, in the words in which St. Paul sets before the Corinthians the story of his toil and struggle for the faith:

"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often; besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

The closing years of that career were a genuine triumph. The man whose name had been cast out as evil was, perhaps, the most honored man in England. The churches of the Establishment, which had excluded him from their pulpits, and sometimes even refused to receive him as a communicant at the altar, were glad to welcome him. Crowds gazed upon him in veneration in the cities where mobs had threatened his life. And little children waited in the streets for his blessing.

The most obvious result of the work of Wesley and his associates, was the founding of those religious societies which developed into the Methodist churches of the English-speaking world. At

his death, the Methodist societies in Europe counted 294 preachers and 71,688 members; in America, 217 preachers and 48,565 members. The Methodist churches now number nearly eight million members; and, if we include with actual members those who are, more or less definitely, adherents of Methodist churches, the number of "the people called Methodists" may be estimated as not far from twenty-five million.

It is, however, one of the curious contradictions of history that the founder of one of the most numerous denominations of the modern church had no thought of founding a new sect. The great religious revolutionist remained at heart conservative to the end of his life. No neglect nor persecution could dampen the intense affection which John Wesley felt for the Church of England. Between his conservatism and his loyalty to the Established Church, on the one hand, and his practical sense of the exigencies of the great religious movement, on the other hand, he fell into inconsistencies; but it is doubtful whether any great practical reform was ever carried to its completion on a plan logically consistent. As late as 1787, Wesley wrote, "I still think, when the Methodists leave the Church of England, God will leave them." Yet, three years before, Wesley had ordained Coke as Superintendent of the work in the United States—an action which resulted in the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and only two years after this utterance of deprecation of withdrawal of the Methodists from the Church of England, he took the still more revolutionary step of ordaining Alexander Mather as Superintendent for England. It was in 1787 that he adopted the plan of protecting his chapels from liabilities under the law by having them all licensed under the provision of the statute "for exempting Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws." Before this date, he had allowed some chapels to be licensed in what seemed to be cases of necessity. But he had opposed the general adoption of the policy, on the ground that it savored of separation from the Established Church. The new policy was adopted in 1787, in accordance with the views of his legal adviser. The reformation had indeed outgrown the designs of its leader.

The Methodist societies were not intended to be churches. The relation which they were intended to bear to the Church of England may be compared with that of the Jesuits and other mis-

sionary orders to the Roman Catholic Church, or with that of the Moravian society of Zinzendorf to the Protestant Church in Germany, or with that of the Societies of Christian Endeavor to various Protestant churches in recent times. While they were composed chiefly of people who owned allegiance to the Church of England, Dissenters were also welcomed to their membership. They were to be *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. As the societies were formed purely for practical religious work, and the members of them retained their relation to the Establishment or to the Dissenting bodies, the societies had no creed. The "General Rules," which were the basis of their fellowship, and which are still lovingly cherished among the most sacred landmarks in the books of discipline of the Methodist Churches of to-day, were rules of practical conduct.

The catholicity of these societies as regards dogma is thus set forth by Wesley himself:

"They do not impose, in order to their admission, any opinions whatever. Let them hold particular or general redemption, absolute or conditional decrees. They think and let think. One condition and one only is required—a real desire to save their souls. They ask only, 'Is thy heart even as my heart? If it be, give me thy hand.' Is there any other society in Great Britain or Ireland that is so truly of a catholic spirit? Where is there such another society in the habitable world? I know none."

Again he says:

"You cannot be admitted into the church or society of the Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, or any others, unless you hold the same opinions with them and adhere to the same mode of worship. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion."

One more quotation from Wesley may be given here:

"I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from me than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair. But if he takes his wig off and begins to shake the powder about my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible."

Was there ever a better definition of heresy than is found in this last quotation? Not the wearing of a theological wig of any particular color, but the shaking of the powder in the eyes of the church, is heresy. That man is orthodox who can work harmoniously and loyally with his brethren in the evangelistic and

philanthropic labors of the church. The catholicity of Wesley's own spirit was remarkable. He published in his "*Arminian Magazine*" the biography of a Unitarian saint as an example to his people. He translated or edited works of Roman Catholics for his "*Christian Library*." He thought the arch-heretics, Montanus and Pelagius, were probably among the holiest men of their times.

The Methodist societies inevitably became churches. In the United States, the Methodist Episcopal Church assumed a definite organization in 1784. The Atlantic Ocean and the Declaration of Independence made it comparatively easy for American Methodists to recognize themselves as distinct from the Church of England. In England, the Methodist societies never, by any definite and formal act, separated from the Church of England, but came gradually to a recognition of the fact that a real separation had been imperceptibly accomplished. But, though the societies have become churches, and a group of new ecclesiastical denominations have been organized, it has been the glory of Methodism in all its history that it has emphasized, not dogma, nor polity, nor ritual, but Christian life.

The Wesleyan movement was not the development of a new theology. Its inspiring principle was essentially the Pauline and Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith. John Wesley himself was certainly not a great theologian. His tendency was practical rather than theoretical. Apart from the fervor of his Christian life and the intensity of his evangelistic zeal, the qualities that contributed most to the success and permanence of the Wesleyan movement were the qualities of the man of affairs rather than those of the thinker. Macaulay ascribes to John Wesley a "genius for government not inferior to that of Richelieu." Buckle characterizes him as "the first of theological statesmen." Leslie Stephen says of him, "No such leader of men appeared in the eighteenth century." Coleridge characterizes Wesley as more logical than philosophical, and Isaac Taylor characterizes him as more intuitional than philosophical. Both these statements seem to be just. His opinions were formed, sometimes by a sort of intuitive common sense, sometimes under the influence of some particular line of argument which appeared to him conclusive. Opinions which he had adopted he could defend with incisive logic. But his was not the philosophical temper, which surveys the whole field of co-ordinated subjects, judicially weighs all kinds



of evidence, and develops broad and consistent systems of thought. In these qualities and the limitations which they involve, Wesley reminds us of those two earlier reformers who constituted his spiritual ancestry, St. Paul and Luther. Wesley's exposition of the doctrine of sanctification, or Christian perfection, which may be considered, perhaps, his chief contribution to dogmatic theology, involves some pretty bad psychology and equally bad exegesis. If he had been a deeper thinker, he would have realized that the Arminian theology is not, any more than the Calvinistic, a complete solution of the problems and mysteries of the ages. But Wesley's theology, if not very profound nor very philosophical, had at least the merit of being practical. It was a theology that could be preached. It presented the great characteristic truths of Christianity in such shape as to make them intelligible to the common people, and serviceable as the inspiration of Christian life. "Our main doctrines," said Wesley, "which include all the rest, are repentance, faith, and holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, as the porch of religion, the next the door, the third religion itself."

As has been already said, the last thing which Wesley desired was to be the founder of a sect; yet it is doubtless as the founder of a sect that he is chiefly known. But this obvious and popular view of the Wesleyan movement is very far from being the true one. John Richard Green presents a truer view, in his "History of the English People," when he tells us: "The Methodists themselves were the least result of the Methodist revival."\* The Wesleyan revival transformed the moral and religious character of the people of England. It is difficult now to realize the practical irreligion and the gross immorality which characterized the English people before the Methodist field preachers, like "one crying in the wilderness," called the nation to repentance.

The influence of Puritanism, indeed, survived in the middle class, though it seemed well-nigh dormant even there. It was from that class, wherein lingered somewhat of the spirit of the Puritan reformation, that the Wesleyan revival took its origin. But the great historian already cited has painted the picture of the irreligion and immorality which degraded the life alike of rich and poor:

"During the fifty years that preceded this outburst [the Wesleyan

\* Vol. IV., p. 147.

revival] we see little save a revolt against religion and against churches in either the higher classes or the poor. Among the wealthier and more educated Englishmen, the progress of free inquiry, the aversion from theological strife which had been left behind them by the Civil Wars, the new political and material channels opened to human energy, were producing a general indifference to all questions of religious speculation or religious life. In the higher circles, 'every one laughs,' said Montesquieu on his visit to England, 'if one talks of religion.'\* Of the prominent statesmen of the time, the greater part were unbelievers in any form of Christianity, and distinguished for the grossness and immorality of their lives. Drunkenness and foul talk were thought no discredit to Walpole. A later Prime Minister, the Duke of Grafton, was in the habit of appearing with his mistress at the play. Purity and fidelity to the marriage vow were sneered out of fashion; and Lord Chesterfield, in his letters to his son, instructs him in the art of seduction as part of a polite education. At the other end of the social scale lay the masses of the poor. They were ignorant and brutal to a degree which it is hard to conceive, for the increase of population which followed on the growth of towns and the development of commerce had been met by no effort for their religious or educational improvement. Hardly a single new church had been built. Schools there were none, save the grammar-schools of Edward and Elizabeth. The rural peasantry, who were fast being reduced to pauperism by the abuse of the poor-laws, were left without much moral or religious training of any sort. Within the towns things were worse. There was no effective police; and in great outbreaks the mob of London or Birmingham burnt houses, flung open prisons, and sacked and pillaged at their will. The criminal class gathered boldness and numbers in the face of ruthless laws which only testified to the terror of society, laws which made it a capital crime to cut down a cherry-tree, and which strung up twenty young thieves of a morning in front of Newgate; while the introduction of gin gave a new impetus to drunkenness. In the streets of London gin-shops at one time invited every passer-by to get drunk for a penny, or dead drunk for twopence.

Much of this social degradation was due, without doubt, to the apathy and sloth of the priesthood. A shrewd, if prejudiced, observer, Bishop Burnet, brands the English clergy of his day as the most lifeless in Europe, 'the most remiss of their labors in private and the least severe of their lives.' . . . A Welsh bishop avowed that he had seen his diocese but once, and habitually resided at the lakes of Westmoreland. The system of pluralities, which enabled a single clergyman to hold at the same time a number of livings, turned the wealthier and more learned

\* Bishop Butler says in the Advertisement to his "Analogy of Religion": "It is come to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious." A writer on Apologetics to-day would not be likely to write in the apologetic tone of this Advertisement.

of the clergy into absentees, while the bulk of them were indolent, poor, and without social consideration.”\*

Let the same historian tell us the story of the transformation of the English Church and of the life of the English People wrought by the Wesleyan movement:

“Its action upon the Church broke the lethargy of the clergy; and the ‘Evangelical’ movement, which found representatives like Newton and Cecil within the pale of the Establishment, made the fox-hunting parson and the absentee rector at last impossible. In Walpole’s day, the English clergy were the idlest and the most lifeless in the world. In our own day, no body of religious ministers surpasses them in piety, in philanthropic energy, or in popular regard. In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm, which, rigid and pedantic as it often seemed, was still healthy in its social tone, and whose power was seen in the disappearance of the profligacy which had disgraced the upper classes, and the foulness which had infested literature, ever since the Restoration. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education.”†

To the awakening of a new religious life in the mass of the English people it is doubtless, in large measure, due that England was saved from a cataclysm like that which, at the close of the eighteenth century, overwhelmed alike all institutions of church and state in France.

In the United States, as in England, it is doubtless true that the indirect influence of Methodism upon the life of the people, through the medium of other churches, has been more important than the direct influence of the Methodist churches. All religious historians recognize the end of the eighteenth century as characterized by a widely prevalent disbelief or neglect of religion. In the higher tone of Christian life which soon began to manifest itself in all the churches of the United States, may doubtless be seen the effect of many different influences; but surely among the most important of these is the influence of Methodist evangelism. Whitefield, the great representative of Calvinistic Methodism, had found a sympathetic hearing in the Calvinistic churches in his visits to America; and the revivals which in many places attended his preaching were not without permanent fruit.

\* “History of the English People,” Vol. IV., pp. 119—121.

† *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV., p. 147.

But far more potent in its influence upon the religious life of the nation was the evangelistic work of Arminian Methodism under the lead of Francis Asbury.

Not only has there been manifested in general a warmer tone of religious feeling and a more vigorous Christian life in all the churches of the English-speaking world, but the life of all the churches has taken on, in greater or less measure, the special traits which were characteristic of the Wesleyan movement. The subordination of creed to life, which was a fundamental character of the Wesleyan movement, is characteristic of the later history of all branches of the Christian Church. The growing catholicity of feeling reveals itself in various forms of interdenominational comity, and particularly in such movements as the Federation of Churches.

Another idea which was emphasized by the Wesleyan revival, and which is rapidly becoming the possession of the church universal, is that of the religious activity of the laity. The army of evangelists which John Wesley directed in that campaign of a half-century, was chiefly an army of lay preachers; and the work of the preachers was sustained and made fruitful by the work of a larger force of class-leaders, and by the activity of individual members, male and female. A Sunday-school was started by a Methodist woman, Hannah Ball, twelve years before the school of Robert Raikes was opened in Gloucester. It was another Methodist woman (afterward the wife of the Methodist preacher, Samuel Bradburn) who suggested the idea to Robert Raikes. His school was opened in 1781. In 1784 he published an account of the new scheme of philanthropic work; and in January, 1785, Wesley republished his article entire in the "Arminian Magazine," and "exhorted his people to adopt the new institution."† The new institution was, indeed, eminently in harmony with the spirit of Methodism. Wesley writes as early as 1784, "I find these schools springing up wherever I go. Perhaps God may have a deeper end therein than men are aware of. Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians?"\* Women as well as men were enlisted in religious work in the

\* Stevens, "History of Methodism," Vol. II., p. 484.

† The original Sunday-schools were established to reclaim and civilize the children of the street. The formation of Sunday-schools for the children of the church is a later evolution.

Wesleyan movement. In a few exceptional cases, women became preachers. A noble instance was Elizabeth Evans, the original of Dinah Morris in George Eliot's "Adam Bede." Surely nothing is more characteristic of the life of the church universal in recent times than the realization of the Protestant conception of the universal priesthood of believers in the active participation of the laity in Christian work. Sunday-schools and Societies of Christian Endeavor, Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, and manifold forms of home missionary enterprise, bear witness to the religious activity of both sexes and of all ages and all classes in the church.

The evangelistic zeal and the tendency to effective organization characteristic of the Wesleyan movement, stand in close relation to the formation of the great societies for special phases of religious work which are so important in the life of the modern church. A society for the distribution of the Bible was organized by a small company of Methodists as early as 1779—The Naval and Military Bible Society. A leading patron of this society was John Thornton, the father of Henry Thornton, whose hospitable home at Clapham was the headquarters of the group of philanthropists who founded the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. The first impulse, indeed, toward the formation of the latter society came from the Welsh Methodist preacher, Thomas Charles. It was in 1782 that Wesley and Coke organized the Society for the Distribution of Religious Tracts among the Poor. This was seventeen years before the date of the more famous Religious Tract Society. The founder of that society, George Burder, was a Congregational minister, who had been led into his career of Christian work by the Methodists Whitefield and Fletcher. The spirit which made Wesley recognize the world as his parish was essentially the missionary spirit. That spirit led the men who had felt the inspiration of the Methodist revival to be among the pioneers in missionary organization. Mellville Horne, who united with the Wesleyan Conference in 1784, but who soon passed from the Wesleyan itinerant ministry into the service of the Established Church, and whose experience as a chaplain in Sierra Leone gave him a profound impression of the needs of the heathen world, was one of the most influential men in the agitation which led in 1795 to the establishment of the London Missionary Society. The "good men of Clapham," who

organized the Church Missionary Society, "were the sons, by natural or spiritual birth, of men who, in the earlier days of Methodism, had shaken off the lethargy in which till then the Church of England had been entranced."\*

Nor was it alone in matters professedly religious that the effect of the Wesleyan movement was seen. Priestley declares: "Methodism has not only Christianized but civilized that part of the nation which had been overlooked by a clergy too careful of its dignity." The spirit of the Wesleyan movement may be characterized, as the brilliant author of "*Ecce Homo*" has characterized the spirit of Jesus Christ, as "the enthusiasm of humanity." When the Methodist evangelists were excluded from the pulpits of the Established Church, they preached in jails, they ministered to the victims of a Draconian penal code on the way to the gallows, they carried the message of forgiveness and peace and hope where sin was vilest and where sorrow was most intense. In the progress of the revival the public mind was awakened to a profound sympathy with the oppressed and the degraded. This "enthusiasm of humanity" soon worked a reformation in that murderous penal code, which had served, not to curb, but to render more ferocious the evil passions of man. John Howard was the friend of John Wesley, and gratefully acknowledged the inspiration received from Wesley's words and life. His noble career of philanthropy was an expression of one phase of the spirit of the great revival. The legislative reforms by which the physical and moral welfare of the poor and the helpless has been protected against the greed of capital and the temptations of vice, the regulation of hours and conditions of labor, the safeguarding of those engaged in perilous occupations, the restriction of the traffic in intoxicating liquors, are among the fruits of the philanthropic spirit which sprang to life in the great religious revival. The "good men of Clapham" not only organized Bible and Tract and Missionary Societies, but achieved the suppression of the African slave trade and the abolition of slavery in the English colonies. Their influence was felt in multitudinous minor reforms in industrial, social, and political life. The last letter written by the trembling hand of John Wesley, the aged, was a letter of encouragement to William Wilberforce in his struggle against slavery.

\* Sir James Stephen, in *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. LXXX., p. 259.

Wesley himself was a pioneer in various lines of social reform. His was the first important effort to supply the people with a cheap and wholesome literature. During his long and laborious life, he gave to the press 371 publications, written or edited or translated or abridged by himself. Down to the year 1756, two-thirds of his publications bore a price of less than one shilling, and more than a quarter of them were sold for a penny.

Wesley established the first dispensary. The conception of the enterprise showed a sagacious appreciation of a public need, though it was certainly not an unmixed good to subject the sick poor to some of the crude methods of treatment prescribed in Wesley's "Primitive Physick."

Another of Wesley's schemes of practical philanthropy was a loan fund for the relief of the temporary embarrassments of the honest and industrious poor. In one year's work of this modest, but very useful, institution, two hundred and fifty persons were aided by loans, though the total capital was only fifty pounds. The Strangers' Friend Societies, for the relief of the poor, the sick, and the friendless, without distinction of nationality or creed, which were first definitely organized by Wesley in 1790, have proved to be among the most effective charitable associations in England.

A popular lecturer has recently remarked that our age and every age needs "not a new gospel, but the gospel anew." Amid the profligacy of the rich, and the squalor and degradation of the poor, and the worldliness and powerlessness of the National Church, the England of the eighteenth century needed "not a new gospel, but the gospel anew"; and it was that which came to her in the Wesleyan revival. In the subordination of dogma to life, in the recognition of the universal priesthood of believers, in the individual sense of responsibility for the salvation of men, in the "enthusiasm of humanity," and the multitudinous philanthropies to which that enthusiasm prompted, the Wesleyan movement was not new, but old. It was a revival of the Christianity of the Apostles, the Christianity of the Christ.

Of that great religious movement, John Wesley was truly the leader. Whitefield was a more impressive preacher, Charles Wesley a sweeter singer, and many another worker contributed his quota of intellectual and moral and spiritual power, without which the total result of the movement would have been less than it has

been. But John Wesley—evangelist, scholar, poet, ecclesiastical statesman, practical philanthropist—represented in his own person not one phase but all phases of the great revival of the eighteenth century. The whole spirit of the movement seems incarnate in him. Rightly, then, will “the people called Methodists,” on both sides of the Atlantic, gratefully celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of John Wesley’s birth. If he were only a founder of a sect, the members of that sect alone might be interested in that celebration; but, in the spirit which to-day, more fully than at any time since the apostolic age, enables all the followers of the Man of Nazareth to declare in unison their belief in one Holy Catholic Church, the lovers of God and man under every variety of name and creed can recognize John Wesley as one of the saints of the church universal, and gratefully rejoice in the service which he was permitted to render toward the up-building on earth of the Kingdom of Heaven.\*

WILLIAM NORTH RICE.

\* Among the many celebrations of the Wesley Bicentennial, none, perhaps, will be more important, none more fully representative of the manifold phases of the Wesleyan movement, than that which is to be held in Wesleyan University. A university is, indeed, a fit place for the celebration of a religious movement that commenced in Oxford. Of all the institutions of higher education in this country under Methodist patronage, Wesleyan University is the one which is the oldest, and has been most influential upon the thought and life of the church and the nation. In that celebration, the ecclesiastical and religious results of the Wesleyan movement will be discussed by the Rev. W. F. McDowell, D.D., Secretary of the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and by the Rev. George Jackson, of Edinburgh. The character of Wesley as a man will be set forth by Professor C. T. Winchester, of Wesleyan University; and the place of John Wesley in history will be discussed by President Woodrow Wilson, of Princeton University. In such a celebration, limited in its programme by neither national nor denominational lines, the manifold phases of the Wesleyan movement may find worthy commemoration. If the four principal addresses shall be published, as is likely, in a memorial volume, it will be a valuable contribution to the history of religion and civilization.